

UNCLASSIFIED

Department of State

9/27/83

INCOMING
TELEGRAM

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ACTION ARA-00

3533

OPPOSED TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.) A SAMPLING:

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OIC-02 CIAE-00 OODE-00 H-01 10-15 NSCE-00 NSAE-00
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O 271027Z SEP 83
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0759
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USCINCSO GUARRY HTS PN
CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

SECTION 01 OF 02 BUENOS AIRES 06756

CINCSO FOR INTAFF, CINCLANT ALSO FOR POLAD, ROME ALSO FOR
VATICAN OFFICE

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, PGOV, AR
SUBJ: ARGENTINE REACTION TO THE AMNESTY LAW

REFS: (A) BUENOS AIRES 6717, (B) FBIS PY23195,
(C) FBIS PY 232005

1. SUMMARY: PUBLIC REACTION TO THE AMNESTY LAW PUBLISHED
SEPTEMBER 23 CONTINUED OVERWHELMINGLY NEGATIVE THROUGH THE
WEEKEND. IF NOT DENOUNCED OUTRIGHT AS A "SELF-AMNESTY,"
MAJOR PUBLIC FIGURES WERE PRACTICALLY UNANIMOUS IN PRE-
DICTING ITS REPEAL BY THE FUTURE CONGRESS. THERE WERE
IMPORTANT NUANCES IN THE OBJECTIONS TO THE LAW, HOWEVER.
THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH, A STRONG MORAL INFLUENCE IN
THE SOCIETY, KEPT ITS SILENCE. OTHER PUBLIC FIGURES
SUGGESTED THAT NOTWITHSTANDING THE SWEEPING DENUNCIATIONS
OF THE LAW, ITS EFFECTS MAY NOT BE ALTOGETHER REVERSIBLE.
THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES DIVIDED NOTABLY IN THEIR JUDGMENTS,
THE RADICALS HARSHLY CONDEMNATORY AND THE PERONISTS
SEEMINGLY REGRETFUL BUT RESIGNED TO THE FACT THAT THE
ARMED FORCES FELT OBLIGED TO TAKE THE STEP. EVEN SO, IT
WAS APPARENT THAT BOTH PARTIES FELT THE SPECIFIC ISSUE OF
ANY ACCOUNTING FOR THE DISAPPEARED HAD TO BE LEFT TO
FUTURE COURTS. MAN-IN-THE-STREET REACTION APPEARED TO BE
ONE OF INDIFFERENCE AS BONAERENSES TOOK TO THE PARKS IN THE
LOVELY SPRING WEATHER, ALTHOUGH THERE WAS A SMALL PUBLIC
DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE LAW IN THE PROVINCIAL TOWN OF
PARANA. THE JUNTA, MEANTIME, IS REPORTEDLY PUTTING THE
FINISHING TOUCHES ON ANOTHER LAW, EXPECTED TO BE THE LAST
SUCH MEASURE TO BE INHERITED BY A NEW GOVERNMENT TO DEAL
WITH SUBVERSION IN THE FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. "LA NACION," THE ONLY MAJOR PAPER TO COMMENT EDITORI-
ALLY ON THE AMNESTY LAW, SAID IT COULD "AFFIRM WITH SCANT
MARGIN FOR ERROR THAT FEW TIMES IN OUR HISTORY WAS THERE
A LEGISLATIVE DECISION WITH SO REDUCED A POPULAR CONSENSUS
OR SUCH GENERALIZED OPPOSITION AS THE LAW CALLED THE 'GROUP
OF NORMATIVE AND POLITICAL MEASURES FOR THE DEFINITIVE
PACIFICATION OF THE COUNTRY.'" JUDGING FROM THE GREEK
CHORUS OF DISAPPROVAL RAISED IN THE IMMEDIATE WAKE OF THE
LAW, THE PAPER HAD IT RIGHT. ("CLARIN" PUBLISHED ON
SEPTEMBER 25 WHAT IT SAID WAS A PUBLIC OPINION POLL COMMI-
SIONED BY THE MILITARY SHOWING 94 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION

-- ITALO ARGENTINO LUDER (JUSTICIALIST PARTY PRESIDENTIAL
CANDIDATE): THE AMNESTY "WILL SURELY BE REPUDIATED BY ALL
THE COUNTRY. . . AND THE FUTURE CONGRESS WILL HAVE THE JOB
OF CONSIDERING THIS LAW, WHICH, CERTAINLY, WILL BE
REPEALED."

-- RAUL ALFONSIN (RADICAL PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE):
"AGAINST THE UNANIMOUS OPINION OF THE CITIZENS AND THE
POLITICAL PARTIES OF ARGENTINA, THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP
HAS JUST ISSUED A SELF-AMNESTY LAW," WHICH "ONCE AGAIN
SHOWS THAT THE MILITARY REGIME IS IN NO WAY CONCERNED
ABOUT THE PEOPLE'S OPINION." HE ALSO DESCRIBED THE LAW AS
"A TREMENDOUS MISTAKE" AND EMPHASIZED THAT "THIS SO-CALLED
LAW WILL BE DECLARED ABSOLUTELY NULL" BY THE FUTURE
CONGRESS.

-- ROGERIO FRIGERIO (INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE): "IT IS NOT ONE OF AMNESTY; IT IS
SELF-PARDON, SELF-AMNESTY AND, AS SUCH, IS AN INSULT TO
ETHICS."

3. IN THE CASE OF MANY OPPONENTS OF AMNESTY, THEIR CRITI-
CISM AND PREDICTIONS THAT IT WILL BE REPEALED CAME DOWN
TO LEAVING THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DIRTY WAR TO THE
LEGALLY-CONSTITUTED COURTS OF THE NEXT GOVERNMENT. NOW
THE JUDICIARY WILL DEAL WITH THE MATTER THEN CANNOT BE
PREFIGURED, BUT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE OPINION, AS
EXPRESSED OVER THE WEEKEND BY CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT CARLOS
AUERO, THAT THE EFFECTS OF THE AMNESTY WILL BE IRREVER-
SIBLE. THIS WAS AT ONE POINT THE THOUGHT OF PERONIST
LUDER, A POSITION HE HAS NOT RECENTLY REPEATED.

4. PREDICTABLY THE REACTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZA-
TION WAS BITTER. NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER ADOLFO PEREZ

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

☐ In Part ☒ In Full **DECONTROL**

☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to

Date ☐ Declassify on ☐ Reason ☐

DECONTROL

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ACTION ARA-08

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ESQUIVEL SUMMED IT UP BY ASSERTING THAT UNDER NO CIRCUM-
STANCES "WILL WE ACCEPT THE LEGAL EFFECTS OF THIS LAW AS
IRREVOCABLE AND FAVORABLE TO THOSE GUILTY OF... CRIMES
AGAINST HUMANITY." THE LEGAL ARGUMENT WAS ADVANCED BY
THE BUENOS AIRES LAWYERS ASSOCIATION, WHICH SAID THE LAW
IS "INSTITUTIONALLY NULL."

5. IN A BLANDER VEIN, LABOR LEADER LORENZO MIGUEL WHO IS
VIRTUAL HEAD OF THE PERONIST PARTY AND THE POWERFUL 62
ORGANIZATION, FOUND THE LAW "UNTIMELY." HE FELT THAT
BEING "ON THE EVE OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT, THAT GOVERN-
MENT SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE ONE TO DECIDE THIS MATTER."
THIS MILD NOTE WAS ALSO SOUNDED BY UNSUCCESSFUL PERONIST
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ANGEL ROBLEDO, WHO CALLED THE LAW
"INOPPORTUNE... POLITICAL ERROR."

6. AT LEAST TWO BISHOPS WERE HEARD FROM BUT THE HIERARCHY
OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SAID NOTHING. LIBERAL BISHOP
AND MILITARY GOVERNMENT CRITIC JAIME DE NEVARES OF
NEUQUEN PROVINCE SAID HE HAD TO CONCLUDE THAT HE WAS
"SADLY MISTAKEN" IN HIS BELIEF THAT THERE WERE SOME IN
THE MILITARY SERVICES WHO REPENTED THEIR ACTS COMMITTED
IN THE DIRTY WAR. NOW, HE SAID, "THE ENTIRE INSTITUTION
RECOGNIZES WITH THE AMNESTY THAT BARBAROUS CRIMES INDEED
WERE COMMITTED, AND NO ONE HAS ACCUSED (THE MILITARY) WITH
SUCH CLARITY AS THEY HAVE ACCUSED THEMSELVES." MSGR. JORGE
NOVAK, BISHOP OF GUILMES, NOTED THE PUEBLA BISHOPS
CONFERENCE OF LAST YEAR APPROVED OF AMNESTIES, BUT SAID
THEY SHOULD NOT BE PROMULGATED BY "INTERESTED PARTIES OR
THOSE INVOLVED" IN THE ACTS THAT ARE AMNESTIED.

7. THE OUTSPOKEN ARCHBISHOP OF LA PLATA, ANTONIO PLAZA,
ON THE OTHER HAND WELCOMED THE LAW. PLAZA, WHO HAS
INJECTED HIMSELF INTO THE BUENOS AIRES GOVERNORSHIP
CAMPAIGN WITH ENDORSEMENTS FOR THE PERONIST CANDIDATE
HERMINIO IGLESIAS, SAID FOLLOWING A MEETING WITH
IGLESIAS: "THE AMNESTY IS INSPIRED BY THE TRADITIONAL
GREATNESS OF SOUL OF THE ARGENTINE PEOPLE AND IS THE BASIS
FOR COMMON EFFORTS IN FAVOR OF THE FATHERLAND." HE SAID

THE MEASURE IS IN KEEPING "WITH THE SPIRIT AND LETTER"
OF HOLY SCRIPTURE IN WHICH "JESUS ASKS US TO FORGET
OFFENSES (AND) PARDON THEM SEVEN TIMES SEVENTY, THAT IS,
INDEFINITELY."

8. EVEN AS THE AMNESTY WAS BEING ANNOUNCED, THE MILITARY
GOVERNMENT BEGAN PREPARING THE GROUND WITH PRESS LEAKS
OVER THE WEEKEND FORECASTING ISSUANCE OF WHAT IS BEING
CALLED THE "DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY LAW." LONG CONSIDERED
WITHIN THE MILITARY AS A NECESSARY COMPANION PIECE TO THE
AMNESTY, THIS MEASURE WOULD GIVE "DUE PROCESS WITH CELERITY"
FOR THOSE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE ON SUBVERSION CHARGES IN THE
FUTURE. ESSENTIALLY, THE LAW WOULD RECONSTITUTE THE
LEGAL REGIME NULLIFIED BY THE CONGRESS IN THE LAST
PERONIST GOVERNMENT WHICH PROVIDED FOR SPEEDIER JUDICIAL
PROCESSES IN SUBVERSION CASES. LEAKED VERSIONS OF THE
NEW LAW INDICATE THE RIGHTS OF APPEAL ON CONVICTION
WILL BE SEVERELY LIMITED.

9. COMMENT: THE OUTPOURING OF PROTEST AGAINST THE
AMNESTY WOULD SUGGEST A GENERALIZED POPULAR REVULSION.
BUT THE NUANCED POSITION OF THE PERONISTS PROBABLY HAS
CONSIDERABLE ECHO WITHIN THE BODY POLITIC, IF NOT THE
GENERAL POPULATION. EVEN FOR MANY SENIOR FIGURES IN THE
RADICAL PARTY, IN CONTRAST WITH THE ADVANCED HUMAN RIGHTS
POSTURE OF ALFONSIN, THE DIRTY WAR IS A CLOSED CHAPTER.
"LA PRENSA'S" GADFLY COLUMNIST J. IGLESIAS ROUCO MAY NOT
HAVE BEEN TOO FAR OFF THE MARK SEPTEMBER 24 WHEN HE WROTE
THAT MUCH OF THE POLITICIANS' DENUNCIATION OF THE LAW IS
"FOR THE GALLERIES." WHAT THEY REALLY BELIEVE, HE
CLAIMED, IS THAT THE AMNESTY WILL SIMPLIFY JUDICIAL ACTION
UNDER A CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT. FEDERAL ALLIANCE PRESI-
DENTIAL CANDIDATE, THE BLUNT FRANCISCO MARIQUE, ALSO
CLAIMED POLITICAL LEADERS OF ALL STRIPES PRIVATELY
"ENDORSED THE PREPARATION AND PROMULGATION" OF THE LAW:
VALLINARESCU